

REGULATORY APPRAISAL

THE HOUSING RENEWAL GRANTS (AMENDMENT) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2005

Purpose and intended effect of the measure

1. The purpose of these Regulations is to introduce a change to the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996. Following the recent review of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and other housing adaptations, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has accepted the recommendation to abolish the means test for the parents of disabled children and to amend the relevant Regulations. These Regulations will introduce a revision to the test of resources for disabled facilities grants.

Risk Assessment

2. Amending the Regulations will improve the position of disabled children and other affected parties who require adaptation work to their homes. If these Regulations are not brought into force as soon as possible there will be direct implications for such individuals. The means test for the parents of disabled children has been an emotive issue for a number of years as it has put great financial pressure on parents in some cases to fund adaptations. Its abolition has been campaigned for by pressure groups such as 'Contact a Family'.

Options

3. There are two options:

- *Option 1: Do Nothing; and*
- *Option 2: Make the Legislation.*

Option 1: Do Nothing

4. This would prolong the risk of disadvantaging the parents of disabled children for DFGs in Wales.

Option 2: Make the Legislation

5. This would bring benefits to all stakeholders not least those who will benefit from being able to have improved access to adaptations to enable them to continue to live in their homes in comfort and security. This follows a similar change, which took place in Northern Ireland in February 2004. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) are also considering this issue as part of a review of DFGs in England.

Benefits

6. Abolition of the means test for parents of disabled children will: ease financial pressures on them; benefit the disabled child; and facilitate the application process and lead to speedier adaptations.

Costs

7. Additional costs are difficult to quantify but are estimated to be in the region of £2 to £3 million. It is envisaged that the additional costs will taper off over subsequent years. The costs are likely to taper off as the numbers of people who dropped out of the DFG application system due to the means test and are now reapplying diminish.

8. Any cost implications arising from the making of these Regulations for local authorities will be met from the annual provision to local authorities. Resources for these grants are unhypothecated and are contained within local authority General Capital Funding (GCF).
9. The costs to the Assembly of making these Regulations will be accounted for by funding from within existing budgets held by the Housing Directorate.

Consultation

With Stakeholders

10. There has been no formal consultation on these Regulations as there has been extensive consultation on the policy behind them, as part of a recent review of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and other housing adaptations between May 2004 and March 2005. Those consulted included: local authorities in Wales; Registered Social Landlords in Wales; Voluntary sector organisations; and interested lobbying groups. A list of consultees is attached at Annex 1.
11. Those consulted overwhelmingly supported the policy behind these Regulations and the Regulations are eagerly expected by all interested parties, including local authorities and other organisations involved in the administration of the DFG system.

With Subject Committee

12. These Regulations were notified to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee via the list of forthcoming legislation on 27 April 2005 (SJR-06-05(p.5) Annex 1), but were not identified for detailed scrutiny.

Review

13. These Regulations follow on from a review of the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and other housing adaptations commissioned by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration that was completed in March 2005.

Summary

14. The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has decided to make this change to the means test for DFGs for the parents of disabled children in order to facilitate increased advantages for this particular group of applicants for these grants.

Annex 1

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Bridgend County Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council
City & County of Cardiff
Carmarthenshire County Council
Ceredigion County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Monmouthshire County Council
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
City of Newport Council
Pembrokeshire County Council
Powys County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
City & County of Swansea Council
Torfaen County Borough Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Ynys Mon County Council

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Bro Myrddin Housing Association
Cadwyn Housing Association
Cardiff Community Housing Association
Charter Housing Association
Cymedithas Tai Cantref
Cymedithas Tai Clwyd
Dewi Sant Housing Association
Cynon Taf Housing Association
Eastern Valley Housing Association
Family Housing Association
First Choice Housing Association
Glamorgan & Gwent Housing Association
Gwalia Housing Association
Gwerin Housing Association
Hafod Housing Association
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association
Mid Wales Housing Association
Newydd Housing Association
North Wales Housing Association
Pembrokeshire Housing Association
Pontypridd & District Housing Association
Rhondda Housing Association
Swansea Housing Association

Taff Housing Association
United Welsh Housing Association
Wales & West Housing Association

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Contact a Family Wales
Disability Wales
Age Concern Cymru
Motor Neurone Disease Association
Care & Repair Cymru
Shelter Cymru
RNIB Cymru